United Nations S/2018/655

Security Council

Distr.: General
2 July 2018

Original: English

United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 59 of Security Council resolution 2409 (2018). It covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the period from 27 March 2018 to 29 June 2018. The report describes progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); provides an overview of political developments following my previous update on progress in the electoral process and implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement (see S/2018/528); outlines progress in adjustments to the Mission's priorities, posture and presence as well as the pursuit of its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians; and provides information on the performance of MONUSCO uniformed personnel.

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. Preparations for and disputes in relation to the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for 23 December 2018 continued to dominate the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

3. On 25 May, the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) concluded an independent audit of the voter register and issued a preliminary report, noting that the voter register was "inclusive, exhaustive and updated, but required improvements". OIF cited as a concern the fact that 16.6 per cent of voters — over 6.5 million — had been registered without all 10 fingerprints. Under Congolese law, the absence of fingerprint registration is not a reason to exclude voters, who can be identified by other means. OIF recommended that the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI) publish the provisional lists as soon as possible.

4. On 28 May, five major political parties and platforms — including Union pour la démocratie et le progrès Social (UDPS), Dynamique de l'opposition, Union pour la nation congolaise (UNC), Mouvement de libération du Congo (MLC), and Ensemble pour le changement — rejected the main conclusion of the audit and

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requested the removal from the voter register of individuals for whom no biometric data had been recorded, the publication of the voter list by registration centres, the replacement of the president of CENI and the replacement of the UDPS-nominated CENI rapporteur. In contrast, during a press conference held on 5 June, André Atundu, the spokesperson of the Majorité présidentielle, welcomed the conclusion of the OIF audit.

5. In addition to the criticisms relating to the integrity of the voter register, opposition parties and civil society groups continue to question the planned use of voting machines and the persistent lack of political space. On 5 June, in interviews with local media, Jean-Marc Kabund, the Secretary-General of UDPS, warned that the party's participation in upcoming polls could be conditional upon the resolution of concerns relating to the voter registry, the voting machine and the replacement of the CENI rapporteur.

6. Regarding the voting machines, the CENI sensitization campaign is ongoing in the country's 26 provincial capitals, where a total of 200 machines have been deployed. The campaign is scheduled to be expanded beyond those capitals in the coming weeks. On 7 June, CENI announced that, by the end of September, it will have received all 106,000 voting machines to be used during the elections. However, CENI is yet to communicate to MONUSCO a request for the delivery of the machines. The Mission's current plan is therefore based on the official request for logistical assistance shared by CENI on 30 November 2017. MONUSCO has notified CENI that the lack of clarity on and the late arrival of electoral materials, including voting machines, would reduce the time frame for deployment and require adjustments to logistical preparations.

7. In the meantime, on 8 June, the National Assembly adopted two amendments to the voter registration law and the electoral law, which effectively exclude Congolese living abroad from participating in the upcoming presidential elections, contrary to initial plans. Days before the vote, the president of CENI had noted that the enrolment of Congolese living abroad presented a significant logistical challenge. At the end of its ordinary session, which concluded on 15 June, Parliament did not, however, examine a proposed amendment to the current law on public demonstrations that had been tabled by the Government.

8. While the Government and CENI appear to be making progress in technical preparations for the elections, the implementation of the confidence-building measures provided for in the political agreement of 31 December 2016 continues to lag. The Government continued to restrict the activities of civil society organizations and journalists. By mid-June, some 118 political prisoners remained in detention. The ban on demonstrations and political gatherings has not been formally lifted. However, political opposition groupings have been able to hold public gatherings without incident over the past four weeks. On 9 June, Ensemble pour le changement, the political platform led by Moïse Katumbi, held a public meeting in Kinshasa which Mr. Katumbi addressed via video link.

9. Speculation around a possible referendum to amend the Constitution — including to allow the President, Joseph Kabila to run for another term — has persisted during the reporting period. Meanwhile, political parties both from the Majorité présidentielle and the opposition continue to form alliances and coalitions ahead of the 23 December polls. Whereas members of the Majorité présidentielle have pledged to promote a joint candidate for the presidential election, several political platforms of the opposition have designated their own candidates. In early June, the Majorité présidentielle and many political parties of the opposition serving in the Government established an electoral platform called Front commun pour le Congo (FCC). President Kabila was designated as the platform's "moral authority". In

response, some opposition parties denounced the creation of the platform, portraying it as a violation of the 31 December agreement.

10. On 7 June, Jean-Pierre Bemba, a former Vice-President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the founding president of the MLC political party, was acquitted by the appeal chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) of earlier convictions for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Opposition parties, including UNC and the Ensemble political platform welcomed the acquittal as a positive development that would boost the ranks of the opposition at the upcoming elections.

11. External partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to express their willingness to support elections, while warning against further postponement. The African Union and OIF reiterated their availability to respond to any requests for expertise and other types of support.

12. On 28 May, during a press conference held in Paris, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, and the President of Angola, João Lourenço, called for the full implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement, with the latter voicing his opposition to the possibility that President Kabila could run for a third term in office. This appeared to echo a statement, on 23 May, by President Macron, following a meeting with the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. In response, the Government in Kinshasa issued a strong protest, affirming the primacy of national sovereignty and rejecting foreign interference.

13. My Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Leila Zerrougui, continued to hold consultations with national stakeholders — including President Kabila, the Prime Minister, Bruno Tshibala, representatives of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, political parties and civil society — in line with her good offices mandate to build confidence in the political and electoral process. She also continued to undertake engagements at the regional level. In this connection, on 31 May she met with the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Zachary Muburi-Muita. From 31 May to 2 June, she visited the Republic of the Congo and met with the President, Denis Sassou Nguesso, and with the Foreign Minister, Jean-Claude Gakosso, to discuss the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the implementation of the MONUSCO mandate.

14. On 30 April, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Saïd Djinnit, met the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, in Entebbe, Uganda, to exchange views on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, as well as on regional relations. President Museveni deplored the continued insecurity in eastern Congo and called for the strengthening of governance in the country.

B. Economic developments

15. The country's macroeconomic framework stabilized, as inflation slightly decreased and the Congolese franc halted its depreciation, largely owing to an increase in commodity prices on international markets. In March the Government announced that its international reserves had once again exceeded $1 billion, after a period of decline. On 10 April, the Banque centrale du Congo lowered its 2018 economic growth forecast to 4.3 per cent, from a previous estimate of 5.2 per cent.

16. On 9 March, President Kabila promulgated the revised Mining Code, adopted by Parliament on 27 January. The code is aimed at raising State revenues through higher taxes and royalty payments on mining companies. On 29 March, the seven largest foreign mining companies operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo sent a communication to the Minister of Mines stating their objections to the law.

C. Security situation

17. The security situation deteriorated markedly in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces, mainly because of renewed activities by Mai-Mai groups and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). In reaction, local populations repeatedly expressed their frustration with the national security forces and MONUSCO through a series of demonstrations and frequent stoning of MONUSCO patrols and bases.

18. By contrast, in Ituri and Tanganyika provinces, despite continued tensions, a significant decrease in major clashes was reported, prompting the return of some internally displaced persons to their homes. In a handful of other areas, including the Kasai region, the security situation was fluid.

19. In response, MONUSCO undertook a series of initiatives, including the employment of a total of 16 standing combat deployments, increased engagement with communities and stronger political outreach at the local level.

North Kivu and South Kivu provinces

20. In the Grand Nord area of North Kivu province, ADF continued to attack civilians, although at a lower level of intensity than that seen during the previous reporting period. The renewed ADF activities are likely linked to the operations of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) under way since January. From 12 to 17 April, ADF killed at least 12 FARDC personnel and injured more than 50 in attacks 6 km north of Semuliki. On 14 April, ADF surrounded a FARDC unit 12 km south-east of Mayimoya, prompting MONUSCO to dispatch attack helicopters to disperse the assailants. On 20 May, ADF attacked a FARDC position in Mayimoya, resulting in the deaths of 10 civilians. Four days later, the group attacked FARDC 25 km north-east of Mbau, resulting in the deaths of 12 FARDC soldiers and 16 ADF combatants. On 9 June, ADF conducted an attack on the road between Mabu and Ngite, killing two FARDC soldiers and wounding one. MONUSCO and FARDC responded jointly, with MONUSCO deploying troops and providing medical evacuation support to FARDC.

21. The deterioration of the security situation in the Grand Nord area, with attacks closer to Beni town, has led to rising frustration among the population, directed against the Government, security forces and MONUSCO. From 23 to 27 April, protests took place in Beni, including a women's protest with over 1,000 participants. In Rwangoma on 28 April, a MONUSCO patrol was stoned by at least 700 civilians, injuring several peacekeepers. On 12 May, a crowd in Boikene also stoned MONUSCO peacekeepers. In recent weeks the situation has improved somewhat, with lowering tensions observed. MONUSCO has undertaken significant community engagement in the area to listen to the concerns of the affected communities.

22. In the Petit Nord area of North Kivu, the security situation also deteriorated. Nyatura continued to engage in extortion and kidnapping. Attacks between armed groups increased or persisted, including between Nyatura and Nande Mai-Mai groups. On 9 April, five Virunga Park rangers and one driver were killed by Mai-Mai Charles. On 29 April, violence reached Goma, the capital of North Kivu Province, with an attack on the Mugunga neighbourhood. In what was allegedly a settling of scores relating to the illegal charcoal trade implicating Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and Nyatura groups, 8 civilians were killed and 22 injured. On 11 May, Nyatura elements attacked a vehicle belonging to the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation, 27 km north of Goma, kidnapping two British tourists and killing one ranger. The tourists were later released and the Institute announced that the park would remain closed to tourism until at least 2019.

23. Masisi territory, also in North Kivu Province, has been marked by escalating tensions near Kitchanga within the Hunde ACPLS militia. On 18 April, nine APCLS and four Nyatura were killed. These incidents followed the assassination on 8 April, in Kitchanga, of a priest and local community leader who was instrumental in many community reconciliation projects.

24. In South Kivu Province, the situation remained volatile, with ongoing FARDC operations against the various Mai-Mai groups fighting under the banner of the Mai-Mai Yakutumba-led Conseil national du peuple pour la souveraineté au Congo, as well as against ethnic Bafulero Mai-Mai in the Ruzizi plain. The FARDC operations had some success, with Yakutumba largely withdrawing from strategic zones such as the Ubwari Peninsula and 600 elements from the allied Mai-Mai Malaika in Shabunda territory and in Maniema borderlands surrendering. However, many Yakutumba elements regrouped in the Itombwe forest and continued to attack FARDC, with a series of attacks launched from 27 April to 3 May.

25. On 24 May, a coalition of Mai-Mai groups led by Yakutumba launched a massive attack on the mining site of Salamabila, operated by the Canadian gold mining firm Banro, in neighbouring Maniema Province. During the assault, a FARDC camp was raided and looted. A reported 21 FARDC soldiers, two Congolese National Police officers, two civilians and 37 Mai-Mai elements were killed. The Raia Mutomboki factions also remained active and presented a constant threat to the protection of civilians in Shabunda territory.

26. Regional dynamics, including tensions in Burundi, have also contributed to a recent deterioration in the security situation in South Kivu. On 11 May, days before the Burundi referendum vote, armed elements attacked a border village in Burundi. It was later alleged that the attack was launched from the Ruzizi plain, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ituri and Tanganyika provinces

27. In Ituri province, the security situation improved in Djugu territory, with fewer violent incidents reported in recent weeks. Sporadic attacks on civilians persisted however and instances of low-level retaliatory attacks between Lendu and Hema were recorded. Some displaced persons and refugees have started to return to their homes.

28. In Irumu territory, also in Ituri province, the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) continued to sporadically attack FARDC positions and to commit human rights abuses, including looting, summary executions and sexual violence. FARDC launched "Operation hero", from 22 to 25 May, against FRPI positions, killing seven FRPI elements.

29. In Aru and Mahagi territories, there were reports of the presence of armed ex-M23 elements. On 20 April, two alleged ex-M23 elements surrendered to FARDC in Mahagi while, on 23 April, two alleged ex-M23 elements were arrested by ANR in Aru.

30. Across Tanganyika province, intercommunity violence subsided and there was a general trend of return of internally displaced persons. However, insecurity remains acute around Bendera and in Nyunzu and Moba territories, where Mai-Mai groups frequently clash with security forces. Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale elements, part of the South Kivu-based Mai-Mai Yakutumba alliance, as well as Twa militias, continue to ambush vehicles and clash with FARDC across the Nyunzu territory and around Bendera. On 13 April, a Mai-Mai group killed a FARDC officer at Kalolo village.

31. It was in this context that, on 11 May, a MONUSCO military convoy was surrounded south of Kongolo, also in Tanganyika Province, by presumed Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale. The 13 peacekeepers who constituted the convoy were taken to the Mai-

Mai camp. Eleven peacekeepers were released the following day. The two others were released on 16 May. At the time of reporting, weapons and ammunition taken from the peacekeepers have not been recovered.

Other provinces

32. In Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé provinces, the combined efforts of MONUSCO and FARDC led to a sharp reduction in LRA activities. The situation in South Sudan also continues to have ramifications for the security situation in that area. On 3 and 5 May, cross-border incursions and looting by South Sudanese elements were reported. Following a relative lull, tensions resumed between local communities and Mbororo cattle herders.

33. In Kasai region, until late April, the security situation had markedly improved. However, throughout May, a dissident wing of the family of Jacques Kabeya, a customary chief known as Kamuina Nsapu, committed a series of abuses across Dibaya territory, including the beheading of family members and associates of the customary chief.

34. Tensions have remained acute in Kamonia territory and in Kasai region, along the border area between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. In April, individuals of Luba and Lulua origin who had sought refuge in Angola continued to cross back into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where they were subsequently harassed by Bana Mura militia and, allegedly, also by Congolese security forces. The Bana Mura militia erected barriers to prevent Luba and Lulua from returning to their original areas, forcing them instead to relocate to neighbouring Kasai Central.

35. In Sud Ubangi province, one security incident affected the overall situation. On 23 April, alleged Enyele elements armed with machetes attacked a FARDC position in Mobambo, on the banks of the Ubangi River, killing two FARDC soldiers. On 24 April, another incident in the same area ended with four assailants killed and three captured by FARDC. The attack was allegedly in response to the arrest on 16 April of the nephew of Udjani Mangbama, the former leader of the Enyele rebellion. Following this attack, hundreds fled across the Ubangi river into the Republic of Congo. Boats capsized and at least 42 people drowned.

MONUSCO response

36. MONUSCO undertook a range of actions to respond to these threats, in line with its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians. In North Kivu province, in Rutshuru and Lubero territories, as FARDC reinforced its presence, MONUSCO intensified engagement with communities and local authorities, contributing to the return of an estimated 350 Hutu and Hunde/Nande families to their homes since mid-March.

37. In Lubero territory, MONUSCO sent a standing combat deployment to Kasugho in April to better understand the protection threats in the area and support investigation into grave human rights violations. A female engagement team was deployed to engage with women and other members of the community.

38. In Beni territory, MONUSCO intensified patrolling and engagement with the community and the authorities to address growing resentment of perceived inaction by FARDC and MONUSCO with regard to protecting civilians from attacks by alleged ADF. MONUSCO has also engaged with FARDC to improve coordination in the conduct of joint operations against ADF. The Mission has provided aerial support to FARDC, coordinated its response with FARDC to ADF attacks, and provided medical evacuation support when needed.

39. In Djugu territory, Ituri Province, MONUSCO deployed three standing combat deployments in response to the upsurge in violence and helped establish 36 community alert networks in villages around Lita, Blukwa and Fataki. On at least two occasions, the networks were successful in reporting cases of potential intercommunity violence between Lendu and Hema, to which the Congolese National Police and MONUSCO responded successfully. Alert networks also played a key role in raising awareness among the Hema and Lendu communities of peaceful coexistence to minimize any recurrence of violence. Three standing combat deployments remain deployed in Djugu territory, namely in Katoto, Libi and Blukwa, ensuring protective patrolling and area security, thereby enabling displaced persons to return to their areas of origin.

40. MONUSCO supported a major provincial dialogue effort in Bunia, where Hema and Lendu communities were brought together from 1 to 22 June to agree on peaceful coexistence. These actions by MONUSCO, as well as the deployment of an additional 1,300 FARDC and Congolese National Police personnel to the area, have contributed to a reduction in violence since April.

41. In South Kivu, MONUSCO responded to threats to civilians, in particular women and girls, posed by Raia Mutomboki factions by increasing long-range patrols to the area, and by engaging community leaders to transmit dissuasive messages to the armed groups. In mid-June, MONUSCO established a standing combat deployment in Kigulube to investigate serious allegations of mass rapes perpetrated by Raia Mutomboki.

42. Also in South Kivu, two days after the attack by Mai-Mai Yakutumba on the Banro mining site in Salamabila on 24 May, MONUSCO deployed a standing combat deployment. In close cooperation with the Sukola II FARDC command in Bukavu, MONUSCO engaged locally with the civilian population, FARDC and other stakeholders in an effort to improve the security situation in and around Salamabila. By mid-June, the situation had calmed significantly, with a reported decrease in the number of violations.

43. Across Tanganyika province, as intercommunity violence subsided and internally displaced persons returned, MONUSCO intensified its facilitation of intercommunity dialogue, continued to establish traditional peace committees, reinforced the early warning systems and implemented six community violence reduction projects. As a result, more than 800 displaced households returned to their villages in April. In Kongolo, with the closure of the base, MONUSCO reinforced the capacities of local protection actors, who have taken ownership of protection tools and mechanisms.

44. In Haut-Katanga province, MONUSCO strengthened local capacities to address the Bantu-Twa conflict, a serious protection threat in Pweto territory. MONUSCO held two capacity-building workshops, on 3 and 4 May and 13 and 14 June, on conflict resolution, mediation and dialogue between the Bantu and Twa communities, under the lead of the provincial Ministry of Interior. Consultations were also held in Pweto in April with Bantu-Twa leaders to identify conflict drivers and suitable solutions for peaceful coexistence in view of an upcoming structured dialogue.

45. In Lubumbashi, in cooperation with the Congolese National Police, MONUSCO is expanding its community policing initiatives.

46. In the Kasai region, MONUSCO continued to provide technical and logistical support to the Consultative Commission for the Resolution of Customary Conflicts, with the training of local committees extended into the five territories of Kasai Central. In Kamonia territory, the Mission continued to work with provincial authorities to ensure the safe release of the women and children hostages held by Bana Mura

militias. MONUSCO has verified 92 cases, out of which 24 were released (13 girls, 11 boys).

47. More broadly, MONUSCO continued the reconfiguration of its footprint and presence on the ground During the reporting period, MONUSCO deployed a total of 16 standing combat deployments, including joint civilian/military missions in North Kivu, Kasai and Maniema. These deployments were undertaken to respond to violence or threats, support investigations into human rights violations and engage with local leaders and communities to reduce tensions and resolve conflicts.

48. MONUSCO will review these deployments, continue to improve its systems to enable more effective projection and adjust to the challenges identified. Further adjustments to the Mission's footprint and operations will be contingent upon the financial resources provided to MONUSCO for the 2018–2019 period.

49. The MONUSCO Community Alert Network transmitted 505 early warning alerts per month, mainly in North and South Kivu and Tanganyika, with a response by the Government and/or MONUSCO in 93 per cent of cases.

Mission-wide strategies

50. During the reporting period, MONUSCO supported the Government in developing an action plan for the negotiated surrender of members of FRPI, the most active armed group in Ituri province. The plan covers aspects such as ceasefire, disarmament, cantonment, reinsertion and reintegration.

51. The Mine Action Service continued to support the protection of civilians in the field through explosive hazard management support for MONUSCO and FARDC operations, in addition to disposing of more than 2.9 tons of obsolete ammunition belonging to the Congolese National Police in Kinshasa.

52. MONUSCO provided technical and logistical support to prosecutors inspecting Congolese National Police detention facilities, resulting in the release of 86 detainees in illegal or prolonged detention and the transfer of another 162 cases to the competent authority for further proceedings.

53. MONUSCO continued to reinforce 12 priority high-risk prisons by implementing the action plan developed in collaboration with national and provincial authorities. In line with the plan, MONUSCO supported the Government in minimizing the risk of mass prison escapes by improving the security alert system and the digitalization of prisoner databases, with a focus on high-risk/dangerous prisoners.

D. Humanitarian situation

54. The humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo persists. A total of 13.1 million persons remain in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. Among them are 4.5 million internally displaced persons, including 2.2 million who have been forced into displacement over the past six months. As at 31 May, there were 772,052 refugees and asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Africa.

55. In response, the humanitarian community has made efforts to meet this increase in life-saving needs. On 13 April, during a humanitarian donor conference in Geneva, international donors pledged $528 million to support the delivery of urgent assistance. As at early June, the actual level of funds disbursed remained low, with the 2018 humanitarian response plan having received only $276.9 million for 2018, representing 17 per cent of funding requirements.

56. Efforts were also made to scale up the emergency response, notably in the crisis areas with large capacity gaps prioritized for the level-3 emergency response (Kasai Region, South Kivu, and Tanganyika). In these areas, more than 1.4 million people received humanitarian aid from October 2017 to February 2018. As a result, and as initially planned, the level 3 emergency response for these regions was deactivated on 20 April. It had been in effect for six months.

57. Humanitarian actors continue to face security-related impediments. A total of 164 security incidents affecting humanitarian aid were reported in the first quarter of 2018, an increase of 10 per cent as compared with the previous quarter.

58. On 8 May, the Government announced an outbreak of Ebola virus disease in Equateur province. The epidemic subsequently spread, including to Mbandaka, the provincial capital. By 19 June, the number of cases stood at 62, including 38 confirmed cases, 4 of them in Mbandaka, a city of over 1 million inhabitants. Overall, 28 deaths related to the outbreak were registered.

59. Since the declaration of the outbreak, the United Nations system and specialized non-governmental organizations, under the leadership of the World Health Organization (WHO), have been providing significant support to the Government in containing the disease outbreak, with very encouraging results.

60. The Government-led response strategy consists of a combined approach. The first pillar relates to the provision of improved health services (treatment free of charge, vaccinations and soon a limited quantity of antivirals) to encourage people in the affected areas to present themselves for medical care. The second pillar is the implementation of a public safety approach, which involves screening at strategic locations.

61. MONUSCO contributed to the response by the Government to the outbreak of Ebola in Equateur province. By late May, the Mission had redeployed 13 staff to Mbandaka to assist with the establishment of an emergency operational centre and oversee the delivery of the Mission's logistical support. MONUSCO has established a 20-person camp in Iboko and has redeployed a fixed-wing aircraft to Kinshasa and a rotary-wing aircraft to Mbandaka. It has used its C-130 aircraft to transport cargo for WHO and the Ministry of Health. This urgent and unplanned effort has forced the Mission to reprioritize the use of resources.

62. The funding requirements for the response to the Ebola outbreak currently amount to $57 million. This figure has already been fully pledged by multilateral and bilateral donors. The current phase remains crucial in determining whether a further spread of the epidemic, notably to other urban centres and adjacent countries, can be prevented. The Government and WHO are strengthening the capacity of priority health centres in Kinshasa, some 600 km away, to ensure an adequate level of preparedness for the eventuality that the disease outbreak spreads there.

E. Human rights situation, including sexual violence and child protection

63. MONUSCO documented 1,183 human rights violations in April and May 2018, an increase as compared with the same period last year (837 violations) and compared with February and March 2018 (931 violations). Of these violations, 79 per cent occurred in conflict-affected provinces and half of these took place in North Kivu province alone, where the human rights situation is of great concern.

64. Of all violations throughout the country, State agents were responsible for approximately 64 per cent and armed groups for 36 per cent of all violations. In April

and May, 191 persons, including at least 29 women, were the victims of extrajudicial killings or summary executions (with 58 victims attributed to State agents and 133 to armed groups) and more than 1,209 persons, including 155 women and 14 children, were illegally deprived of their liberty by State agents and armed groups. While some demonstrations were held without incident, restrictions on democratic space continued to impede the establishment of an environment conducive to credible, peaceful and transparent elections. Some 57 violations were linked to restrictions to fundamental freedoms and political rights, including the prevention of peaceful demonstrations or political meetings, acts of intimidation, threats and arbitrary arrests of journalists, civil society activists and members of political parties.

65. Gérard Mulumba, a former member of parliament and vocal critic of the Government, and his co-defendant Isaac Kabundi saw their sentences confirmed by the district court in Kinshasa. They had both been sentenced in the first instance to 18 months in prison for insulting the President and to one month in prison for public abuse in a social media message that the defendants had exchanged. Three Lutte pour le changement activists who had been arrested while urging people to demonstrate on 31 December 2017 in Kisangani, Tshopo Province, were sentenced on 27 April to six months for "spreading false rumours".

66. Some progress was made towards the implementation of confidence-building measures as provided for in the 31 December 2016 agreement, but serious challenges remain. As at early June, at least 121 political prisoners or prisoners of opinion remained in detention throughout the country. Five activists of the citizens' movement Filimbi, arrested in December 2017 and detained by intelligence services for over five months, without judicial oversight, were transferred to Makala prison on 9 June and prosecuted for insulting the Head of State, threatening State security and inciting civil disobedience.

67. MONUSCO continued to support efforts by the Congolese authorities to fight impunity in addressing cases of international crimes and serious human rights violations against both State and non-State actors. MONUSCO assistance included the development of prosecutorial strategies and witness support to help the authorities meet international human rights standards and due process in investigations and prosecutions of such cases. The Mission is focusing on 38 priority cases in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri.

68. As a result of these efforts, on 28 April, the Military Court of South Kivu sentenced FARDC Lieutenant Colonel Maro Ntumwa, also known as *Marocain*, to a 20-year prison term for crimes against humanity and war crimes, pillage and attacks on civilians, committed in Kalehe territory, between 2005 and 2007.

69. MONUSCO is also supporting the national authorities in the Sheka trial, including through the erection of an ad hoc detention cell and courtroom in Goma. Similarly, the Mission is supporting the joint investigation by both civilian and military justice authorities into crimes allegedly committed in Djugu between December 2017 and March 2018 in the context of intercommunal violence between Hema and Lendu groups.

70. The successful prioritization strategy in these three provinces is being replicated elsewhere. In the Kasais, led by MONUSCO, military justice authorities have now agreed on a list of priority cases, and a similar process is beginning in Tanganyika province. At least 93 suspects have been arrested and questioned, while 115 victims and witnesses, including 17 minors, have been interviewed.

71. MONUSCO pursued efforts to improve the implementation of the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces, including through field visits and other awareness-raising activities. Measures have

been taken to avoid cases of non-compliance with the Policy, especially in the context of jointly planned military operations with FARDC.

Sexual violence

72. In April and May, MONUSCO documented cases of rape and other forms of conflict-related sexual violence committed against at least 98 women and 18 children, confirming an increasing trend. Raia Mutomboki in South Kivu — the most affected province — are the main perpetrators. State agents were responsible for 42 cases (33 by FARDC soldiers, 7 by Congolese National Police agents and 2 by other State actors). MONUSCO continued its advocacy efforts with the relevant authorities to curb this trend.

Child protection

73. Through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, MONUSCO verified 292 grave violations against children. At least 240 children (14 girls, 226 boys) escaped or were separated from armed groups, mainly from Mai-Mai Mazembe (68), Nyatura (59), and FDLR-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (25), mostly in North Kivu (203). A total of 18 girls survived rape and other forms of sexual violence, mostly by FARDC (7) and Raia Mutomboki (6), in North Kivu (9), South Kivu (6), Ituri (2) and Kasai (1). Some 24 children (9 girls, 15 boys) were killed (7) or maimed (17), mostly by Kamuina Nsapu (13) and FARDC (9), in Kasai (14) and North Kivu (9), and 9 children (3 girls, 6 boys) were abducted by ADF (5), Mai-Mai Mazembe (3) and Nyatura (1), all in North Kivu. During the period, one school was attacked by FRPI combatants in Ituri.

III. Deployment of MONUSCO and implementation of its mandate

A. Strategic dialogue and exit strategy

74. MONUSCO continues its transition planning to increase national ownership and a progressive transfer of tasks prior to its phased exit. The Mission also continues to adjust its footprint and streamline civilian tasks towards this objective.

B. Support for the 31 December 2016 political agreement and elections

75. The Mission leadership continued to pursue its good offices for the implementation of an inclusive, credible and timely electoral process and continued to advocate for the conclusion of discussions on the revised Projet d'appui au cycle électoral au Congo (PACEC).

76. MONUSCO continued to provide technical support to CENI, notably in relation to preparations for the forthcoming opening of the registration and processing centres for the provincial election candidacies. MONUSCO is completing the colocation of its electoral experts at the CENI headquarters, while several electoral experts have been redeployed to strengthen the Mission's support for CENI at the provincial level. MONUSCO also continued to raise the need for further progress in the implementation of the agreed confidence-building measures.

77. During the reporting period, MONUSCO further engaged with the relevant authorities on the need to demonstrate tangible progress on the implementation of the confidence-building measures and the opening of political space, observing that,

while progress was being realized in some areas, in others, in particular in relation to detentions, more attention may be required. MONUSCO continued to advocate with the Government and key national stakeholders to revise presidential decree 05/026 (2005) relating to the electoral process security plan.

78. In addition, the Mission updated its existing joint mission plan to prevent and mitigate elections-related violence and directed the review and exercise of plans at the field office level. Given its limited resources, the vast area that it has to cover and the broad spectrum of threats to civilians, the Mission continues to focus primarily on efforts to prevent and mitigate elections-related violence, including through preventive political engagement, monitoring and advising the Congolese National Police on crowd control management, and human rights monitoring and reporting.

C. Other mandated tasks

1. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration/disarmament, demobilization repatriation, resettlement and reintegration

79. From April to June, MONUSCO registered the surrender of 37 children associated with armed groups and 20 adult combatants from Congolese armed groups, with 18 of the adults entering the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. In addition, the Mission registered and repatriated 31 foreign combatants and dependants during the reporting period.

80. MONUSCO made progress in implementing its community violence reduction projects. The projects consisted of labour-intensive employment, countering sexual and gender-based violence, child protection, sustainable livelihoods creation, or revenue generation initiatives specific to women.

2. Stabilization

81. MONUSCO continued to support the operationalization, under the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy, of six targeted stabilization interventions, which focus on the root causes of conflicts in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces, with funding from the multi-donor $40 million Stabilization Coherence Fund. On 10 April, the Fund allocated $1 million to support stabilization initiatives in the territory of Djugu, focusing mainly on community reconciliations and the restoration of State authority.

3. Progress on adjustments of MONUSCO priorities, posture and presence

82. In line with the prioritization outlined in resolution 2409 (2018), MONUSCO continued to streamline its civilian efforts, focusing primarily on the protection of civilians, as well as support for the political process, including electoral support.

83. During the reporting period, MONUSCO finalized its planned Mission laydown for the coming 2018–19 period, through elections. This planning exercise was a result of comprehensive civilian, police and military coordination, with the final laydown based on a careful analysis of protection of civilians concerns and threats; considerations related to the safety of peacekeepers, including proximity to medical infrastructure in line with United Nations policy; and critical supply lines, including a consideration of electoral hubs and hotspots for the coming period.

84. Once the Mission's budget for the financial year 2017–2018 has been adopted, and if the additional rapidly deployable battalions can be generated for deployment on time, MONUSCO plans to base its fourth and fifth battalions in the Tanganyika province and the Kasais, respectively. Once these battalions are deployed, the

Mission's sectoral boundaries will be redrawn, to ensure ease of command and control and to align force sectors with field office areas of responsibility.

85. On the assumption that the incoming rapidly deployable battalions will be deployed on time, and that the Mission will be provided with the required financial resources, MONUSCO is already in the process of repatriating 1,700 troops by 31 August 2018 to make way for the incoming battalions. The Mission had closed four static company operating bases by the end of the reporting period, and was in the process of closing a further seven. More bases will be closed in the coming months, as the Mission continues to make its protection through projection concept a reality.

86. Meanwhile, a joint United Nations-Southern African Development Community task force was established during the reporting period to assess the Intervention Brigade of the force. Following a series of exchanges in New York and in Goma, including with relevant authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it was determined that the Intervention Brigade would be reconfigured to make it more flexible, agile and able to conduct both offensive and protection of civilians operations across North Kivu. Two infantry battalions will be reduced to allow the generation of additional enablers that would improve manoeuvrability and enhance effectiveness. Additional enablers to be generated or reconfigured include a special force company, a strengthened intelligence cell and a composite utility/attack helicopter unit. The reconfigured Intervention Brigade is expected to be fully operational by 30 September.

87. Some adjustments are also planned to the current laydown of the Mission's formed police units, which are to provide protection for civilians and United Nations staff and premises, in key urban hotspots. Minor adjustments to field office locations continued through the reporting period, with a view to ensuring that priority field offices had the necessary resources.

4. Assessment of performance of uniformed personnel

88. During the reporting period MONUSCO observed no notable cases of failure to implement the mandate by uniformed personnel. However, the Mission is currently investigating a recent incident during which some of its troops may have underperformed. The conclusions of this inquiry will be communicated to the Council.

5. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

89. MONUSCO continues to enforce the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse among all personnel. A total of 10 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse received within the reporting period were duly assessed and reported, for onward referral to the appropriate investigations entities for action. The Mission continues to implement sexual exploitation and abuse preventive measures, including training for personnel, poster campaigns, risk assessment and advisory visits to base camps, Military Police deterrent patrols to enforce curfew and the non-fraternization policy for uniformed personnel.

6. Gender considerations in mandate implementation

90. During the reporting period, the Mission's stabilization programmes allocated 15 per cent of their budgets to gender equality interventions. MONUSCO prioritized funds for women as part of its efforts to mediate land conflicts in Ituri province. As a result, one third of the 160 beneficiaries of 212 hectares, allocated over recent months, were women.

91. In its efforts to improve gender responsiveness in the protection of civilians, MONUSCO persuaded a group of women in South Kivu to lay down their weapons

and use peaceful means to help protect their communities. The group, known as "Wa Mama Tujigombowe" ("Let us free ourselves"), had taken up arms to ensure the security of its members. MONUSCO has subsequently provided training to the women on ways to ensure their security, including through the use of the Mission's community alert networks.

92. In March and May, PACEC, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and MONUSCO organized workshops in Tanganyika and Haut-Katanga on women and elections, to support potential female candidates to prepare for the elections. MONUSCO also supported 40 political women prospective candidates, in April and June, in developing a strategy to secure the commitment of the leadership of their political parties' to put more female candidates on their electoral lists.

IV. Safety and Security of United Nations personnel

93. From 1 March to 8 June 2018, 202 security- and safety-related incidents affecting United Nations personnel, uniformed components, assets and operations were recorded throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These include 84 crime-related incidents, 33 incidents of civil unrest, 71 hazard-related cases and 14 incidents linked to armed conflict.

94. In the Beni area, military operations against ADF have contributed to the risk against United Nations personnel, premises and assets. Humanitarian access to some areas remains a challenge due to the recurrent ADF attacks in the interior of Beni territory and areas near Beni town. On occasions, movement of United Nations personnel has been suspended or restricted, owing to risks associated with ADF attacks.

V. Observations

95. Six months before the holding of crucial presidential and legislative elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, continued progress has been made in their preparation. To date, key milestones in the electoral calendar are being reached, albeit not without challenges. The finalization of the voter register, the promulgation of the law on the distribution of seats, and the audit of the voter register are all important steps in the right direction. However, much more needs to be done to foster greater confidence in the process and guarantee that these highly anticipated polls are inclusive, free, credible, peaceful and in line with the Constitution. To achieve this critical objective, the confidence-building measures provided for in the 31 December 2016 agreement must be fully implemented. Once more, I call upon the Government to live up to its commitments in this regard.

96. Infringements on the freedom of expression — notably for journalists and civil society activists, as well as political opponents — do not contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to credible and inclusive elections. I welcome the Government's consent to the holding of the rally of Ensemble pour le changement on 9 June in Kinshasa, following the UDPS rally on 24 April, also in Kinshasa. I deeply regret, however, that these tentative steps are yet to be replicated across the country. I urge the Congolese authorities to lift the ban on public demonstrations so that the Congolese people can fully enjoy their legitimate political and civil rights in accordance with the Constitution. It is also critical that the authorities hold accountable the perpetrators of human rights violations, irrespective of their rank or affiliation, and put an end to illegal prolonged unlawful detention by the intelligence services.

97. The electoral process is marked by divergence of views among national stakeholders. In recent weeks, this situation has been fuelled by disagreements over the planned use of voting machines, a lack of confidence in the voter registry and disputes related to the list of political parties issued by the Ministry of Interior. I urge all political actors from the Majorité présidentielle and from the opposition, as well as civil society groups, to continue to work relentlessly and in a spirit of compromise, to find the most practical, satisfactory and consensual solutions to these issues with the sole aim of ensuring the timely holding of inclusive, free and credible elections, in line with the Constitution. I call upon all the country's partners and countries of the region to continue to provide the necessary assistance and to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo to achieve this goal.

98. The lack of a clear disbursement plan for the funding of the polls remains a source of concern. Delayed, inconsistent and irregular disbursements of Government funds to CENI could adversely affect electoral timelines and spark new tensions. I strongly urge the Government to abide by its commitments to fund the upcoming polls in a timely manner.

99. I am deeply troubled by the marked increase in armed group activities in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces and its devastating impact on the security of civilian populations. I call upon the authorities to redouble their efforts — in particular their political outreach towards armed groups and communities — in close coordination with MONUSCO to reduce and end the threat posed to civilians. The Congolese authorities, with the support of MONUSCO, must spare no efforts in building on and consolidating the recent pause in major clashes in Ituri and in Tanganyika, in particular. No window of opportunity for durable peace, however small, must be allowed to close.

100. The humanitarian situation, driven by continued insecurity, remains of grave concern. I welcome the $528 million pledged by international donors to support the delivery of urgent aid to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, it is of utmost importance that pledges be promptly disbursed and funding gaps addressed immediately, to enable an adequate response to humanitarian needs. I call upon the Government to do its utmost to ensure a safe and secure environment for the population and to allow for unrestrained access to people in need of humanitarian assistance.

101. The current Ebola outbreak in Equateur Province, in the north-eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is different from the previous seven that the country has experienced. The risk is higher owing to the danger of transmission along the riverine route towards Kinshasa, Kisangani, the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo. The response is larger in scale and more sophisticated, including with the rapid surge deployment by the United Nations system, notably WHO, and th availability of the vaccine, as well as antivirals. Much has been done in recent weeks to contain the outbreak, but vigilance must be maintained. I commend the leadership of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for its swift and decisive response to the outbreak, and I am grateful for the support and assistance provided by donors and partners to help treat the victims and prevent the spread of the disease.

102. Finally, I wish to thank my Special Representative, Leila Zerrougui, for her leadership and all personnel of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team for their dedication to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to express my deep appreciation to the troop- and police-contributing countries, as well as to regional organization, bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations, for their invaluable support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.